



Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (4.49 pm): I rise to contribute to the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill. Integrity in public life is not an abstract concept. It is the foundation on which trust in this parliament rests, and once that trust is weakened it is extraordinarily difficult to rebuild. That is why electoral integrity matters, that is why political donation laws matter, and that is why decisions made by government in this space demand the highest possible standard of care.

Queensland has spent more than a decade strengthening that standard. Successive Labor governments undertook significant integrity reforms: lowering disclosure thresholds, introducing real-time reporting and implementing the recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission following Operation Belcarra. Those reforms were designed to protect decision-making from undue influence and to restore community confidence in politics. They were deliberate, they were evidence-based and they were supported by Queensland's peak integrity institutions.

The Crime and Corruption Commission has been clear: Queensland currently has a strong political donations framework as a result of those reforms. That is not a partisan view; it is the considered assessment of the state's independent corruption watchdog. The Crisafulli Liberal National Party government now seeks to unwind key elements of that framework, not because the system is broken and not because corruption risks have diminished but because this government has chosen a different path—a path that increases private money in politics and does so against the advice of integrity experts.

The Crime and Corruption Commission has warned that the changes proposed in this bill represent a significant departure from Queensland's robust donations framework and are out of step with national and international integrity reforms. That warning alone should have warranted reflection or maybe hesitation before proceeding. Instead, it has been ignored.

The risks associated with political donations are not hypothetical; they are well documented. Community concern about corruption, gifts and benefits influencing government decision-making remains one of the highest risk areas identified by Queenslanders in integrity surveys. Confidence in democracy depends not only on decisions being fair but also on them being seen to be fair. This bill undermines that confidence. It increases the amount of private money that can be donated across an electoral cycle, in effect, as we have heard multiple times already this afternoon, quadrupling the amount that can flow to political parties and candidates over a four-year term. That is not a technical change; that is a profound shift in the balance between public interest and potentially private influence, and it is occurring at a moment when the power of government decision-making is expanding, not contracting.

Queensland, excitingly in some ways, is entering a period of extraordinary state involvement in planning, infrastructure and development. Major projects, significant investments and long-term decisions are being made by LNP ministers and that cabinet. At precisely this moment, when the stakes

are highest, this government is choosing to lower integrity guardrails. The Crime and Corruption Commission has been explicit: increased risks of actual or perceived corruption may arise from these changes during the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. That is not conjecture; that is a warning. Integrity is not tested when decisions are easy; it is tested when power is concentrated, money is flowing and pressure is high. This bill is designed pretty much to fail that test. What makes the situation even more concerning is not just what is in the bill but also how it was developed.

The Crime and Corruption Commission, the very body whose recommendations underpin Queensland's integrity framework, was not consulted during the drafting of the legislation. The CCC did not appear at the public hearing, and when the opposition sought to require the CCC to give evidence that request was denied. Queenslanders deserve to ask why. Why would a government committed to integrity proceed without consulting the state's top corruption watchdog? Why would it refuse to hear that watchdog in a public forum? Why would it push such significant changes through a committee process over the Christmas and New Year period when scrutiny is at its weakest and then move the bill as an urgent bill?

Process is not incidental to integrity; it is integral to it. The rushed timeline, the limited hearings, the unanswered questions and the repeated deferral of responsibility back to the Attorney-General all point to a government unwilling to subject its decisions to proper scrutiny. Even basic questions, including whether increased donation caps would inevitably lead to future increases in expenditure caps, were left unanswered. That silence absolutely speaks volumes.

This bill also makes changes to voting rights that have raised serious constitutional and human rights concerns by stakeholders. The Queensland Law Society, for instance, has been clear that these changes are unsupported by evidence and risk unjustified disenfranchisement. Once again, the pattern is the same: sweeping change, minimal justification and inadequate engagement with expert advice.

Integrity reform should not be rushed and it should never proceed in defiance of independent oversight bodies, yet that is exactly what the Crisafulli LNP government has chosen to do. This bill may carry the title 'Restoring Electoral Fairness', but fairness cannot be restored by increasing private money in politics, it cannot be restored by sidelining the Crime and Corruption Commission and it cannot be restored by weakening the safeguards that Queenslanders have come to rely on, especially post the Fitzgerald inquiry of the 1980s which shone a light on deeply entrenched corruption including political misconduct, aka brown paper bags. Queenslanders expect better. They expect a government that strengthens trust, not one that risks eroding it, and they expect integrity to be treated as a core responsibility of government, not an inconvenience.

This side of the House will continue to stand for transparency, accountability and the highest standards of integrity in public life. This bill puts into question much of that. When you put that next to some of the questionable approaches that this government is having even around, let's say, the electoral boundary redistribution, all of these put together put question marks around the integrity of government and of parliament, and that erodes the public trust in the work that we must do here as lawmakers. That is why we will continue to stand for these measures of transparency and accountability and hold this government to account, and we will not stand by and allow those to be risked in any way by this LNP government.